

# **Chinese Hymns in Chinese Baptist Hymnals**

by  
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## **Introduction**

The earliest Christian missionaries to reach China were the Nestorians in the seventh century, during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). The Nestorian religion was called the Luminous Religion (Ching Chiao; 景教) by the Chinese and was received warmly by the Emperor Tai-tsung (唐太宗). It flourished throughout China during the Tang Dynasty. However, the Nestorian religion was banned in 845 by Emperor Wu-tsung (唐武宗) and mostly disappeared in China.

Roman Catholic missionaries began to arrive in China in the late thirteenth century. The most significant Catholic missionaries were John of Montecorvino (1247-1328), who arrived in Peking (now Beijing) in 1294 during the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368), as well as the Jesuits Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607), who came to China in 1579, and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), who came in 1582 during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

The Rites Controversy, which happened during the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1912), involved a conflict between the Catholic Church in Rome and the Jesuit missionaries in China. The main issue of the controversy was that the Jesuits considered Chinese ancestor worship to be merely an expression of reverence to the deceased, not against biblical teaching. Supporting the Jesuits, Emperor K'ang Hsi (1654-1722, 康熙皇帝) was offended by the Catholic Church authority in Rome and commanded that Christianity be prohibited in China from 1721 on.

Protestant Christianity was viewed as heterodox by the Ch'ing government in the nineteenth century when pioneer missionaries came to China. The Ch'ing government considered Christian teachings as potential rivals to its imperial authority as well as its control of the society. Consequently, it restricted Protestant mission activities.

Since the early Protestant missionaries were not permitted to preach, they concentrated on the planning of mission work, language study, translating Scripture into Chinese, and writing Christian tracts in Chinese.

### **Robert Morrison**

Robert Morrison (1782-1834, Chinese name 馬禮遜) was the first Protestant missionary to reside in China. He arrived in Canton (廣州) in 1807 under the appointment of the London Missionary Society. After arriving in Canton, Morrison immersed himself in Chinese culture and language. He managed to learn not only to speak Cantonese and Mandarin but also to write in Chinese.

Morrison was a prolific author who translated several books of the Bible and wrote Christian tracts in Chinese. He also translated the *Book of Common Prayer* into Chinese. Most significantly, Morrison translated hymns and published a Chinese hymn book titled *Sacred Odes to Nourish the Mind* (*Yang Sin Shen She*; 養心神詩) in 1818. It was the first hymnal printed in the Chinese language. This words-only hymn book of twenty-seven leaves contained thirty translations of Psalms and hymns commonly used in England, including translations of metrical psalms from the *Scottish Psalter*, Isaac Watts's hymns, and the *Olney Hymns* by William Cowper and John Newton.

Morrison and his assistant, Liang Fa (梁發), who became the first Chinese evangelist, published a second hymnal called *Prayers and Hymns* in 1833. The hymnal of sixty pages included English hymns translated into Chinese as well as prayers composed by Liang from the *Morning Service of the Church of England*.

### **Baptist Hymnals**

Other missionaries were also involved in compiling hymnals, including a few early Baptist missionaries – Tarleton Perry Crawford and R. H. Graves.

### **Tarleton Perry Crawford**

Tarleton Perry Crawford (1821-1902, Chinese name 高第丕) was commissioned by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to be a missionary in

China. He and his wife arrived in Shanghai in 1852. Later, they moved to the Shandong Province (山東省) and served fifty years in China.

In a letter sent to a missionary C. S. Champness, Mrs. Crawford mentioned that there was not a single hymn book in Chinese when they first arrived in Shanghai. With the assistance of his Chinese tutor, Tarleton Crawford compiled a new hymnal in the Shanghai dialect called *Tsán Shîn She* (*Hymn Book*; 讚神詩) and published it in 1855. After moving to the Shandong Province in 1863, Crawford transliterated the Shanghai hymns into Mandarin. The Mandarin hymnal was printed in 1870.

One of Crawford's hymn texts appears in the 1973 *New Songs of Praise* (discussed later in the presentation). "Father in Heaven, Eternal God" was written in 1901 and paired with the tune FOREST by Aaron Chapin.

### **R. H. Graves**

R. H. Graves (1833-1912), a Southern Baptist missionary came to Canton in 1856. For a number of years, he was pastor of the Chinese Baptist Church in Canton. When the South China Mission and the American Baptist Missionary Union established the China Baptist Publication Society in 1899, Graves was selected as the president.

In 1876, he compiled a hymnal titled *Songs of Praise to the Lord* (*Tsan Choo She Chang*; 讚主詩章). The hymn book contained two hundred and eighty-six hymns and eight doxologies, including several of Graves's own translations. The remaining were selections from other Chinese hymnals with modifications. S. B. Partridge, a missionary of the American Baptist Missionary Union, once commented that Graves's hymnal was "a most valuable addition to Chinese church literature."<sup>1</sup>

### ***Gospel Hymns* (福音聖詩), 1903**

In 1903, the China Baptist Publication Society in Canton issued a hymnal called *Gospel Hymns* (福音聖詩) in Cantonese. The hymnal had two hundred and ten hymns as

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<sup>1</sup> Henry S. Burrage, *Baptist Hymn Writers and Their Hymns* (Portland, ME: Brown Thurston & Co., 1888), 613.

well as three doxologies. The 1921 edition of the hymnal had two hundred and fourteen pieces. The hymnal was well received with over twelve thousand copies printed.

### ***Hymns of Praise* (頌主詩歌), 1932**

The North China Baptist Association issued *Hymns of Praise* (頌主詩歌) in 1932. The hymnal contained three hundred hymns and was published in the Shandong Province in word, numerical, and music editions. The hymn book was used widely by the Baptist churches in North China, as mentioned by Mrs. R. T. Bryan (Chinese name 萬施美麗) who wrote: “The selection of hymns has proven very satisfactory to many churches and chapels throughout North and Interior China.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1941, the China Baptist Publication Society in Shanghai compiled a hymnal for the Baptist churches in China. The hymnal, titled *New Hymns of Praise* (新頌主詩集), was based on the 1932 hymn book and kept the same numbering, with sixty choruses, some inserted among hymns and some attached at the end of the hymnal. The 1941 hymn book was the first attempt of the Baptist churches in China to use the same hymnal nationwide.

### ***New Songs of Praise* (頌主新歌), 1973**

In the early 1960s, Chinese Baptists sensed the need to expand and update the *New Hymns of Praise*. A hymnal committee was formed in 1961 to embark on the task. However, the compiling and editing of works could not press forward until 1970, when the committee finally established a policy that stated that the new hymnal would retain the same translated hymn texts unless the committee could find better ones.

In 1973, the Baptist Press in Hong Kong issued the new hymnal, titled *New Songs of Praise* (頌主新歌). The hymn book was compiled by a committee whose members came from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia. It was co-edited by Gabriel Chi (b. 1922, 紀哲生) and L. G. McKinney (Chinese name 麥堅理), with assistance from Baptist

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<sup>2</sup> Preface, 1941 edition.

missionaries in Southeast Asia as well as consultants at the Sunday School Board, including the late Dr. William J. Reynolds.

### **Chinese and Taiwanese hymns**

The hymnal contained six hundred and thirty-nine hymns, in addition to eighty-one responsive readings and nine indexes. About ten percent of the hymnal consisted of Chinese hymns, including seven hymn texts written by Tzu-chen Chao (1888-1979, 趙紫宸), better known as T. C. Chao. Chao, who graduated from Vanderbilt University, was a theologian, Christian writer, poet, and educator. He was often called “The Father of Chinese hymnody.”

Chao’s text “Golden Breaks the Dawn” (清晨歌, no. 28) was set to the tune LÊ P’ING (樂平調; Example 1), meaning “peaceful joy,” which was composed in 1934 by Hu Te-ai (胡德愛), a music student at Yenching University (now University of Peking). The text was first translated into English by Mr. & Mrs. Bliss Wiant in 1946 with the first line “Rise to Greet the Sun.” Another translation was done by Frank Price in 1953 with a different first line, “Golden Breaks the Dawn.” The hymn was regarded by Reynolds as “representative of Asian hymnody that has found a place in American hymnals.”<sup>3</sup>

The tune JASMINE set to the text “Sweet and Holy Jesus’ Name,” is a popular Chinese folk song, known as Mo-li-hua (Jasmine; 茉莉花, Example 2). The text of the two stanzas was written by Chauncey Goodrich (1836-1925, Chinese name 富善), describing Jesus as fresher and sweeter than any exotic flower. The melody was used by Giacomo Puccini in his opera *Turandot* (1926) as a motif to represent the Chinese Princess.

Also noteworthy was a hymn tune titled TOA-SIA (大社, Example 3) appears three times in the Baptist hymnal (nos. 78, 483, 606), each with a different text. TOA-SIA, named after a small town in Taiwan, is one of the Taiwanese tunes that I-to Loh (b.

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<sup>3</sup> William J. Reynolds and Milburn Price, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Pub. Co., 1999), 132.

1936, 駱維道) collected from aboriginal tribes. The text of “The True God Made Heaven and Earth” was translated by Goodrich from a Western source in 1852. The hymn was first included in the 1964 Taiwanese hymn book *Sèng-Si* (*Hymns*; 聖詩) and later also appeared in several Chinese and American hymnals.

### **Twenty-First Century Chinese Hymnals**

Three hymnals were issued in the first decade of the twenty-first century. *Century Praise* was issued by the Chinese Baptist Press in Hong Kong in 2001, the ecumenical *Hymns of Universal Praise* by the Chinese Christian Literature Council Ltd. in Hong Kong in 2006, and *Sèng-Si* by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan in summer 2009.

#### ***Century Praise* (世紀頌讚), 2001**

The Chinese Baptist Press in Hong Kong printed a new hymnal at the turn of the century called *Century Praise* (世紀頌讚). Richard R. Lin (b. 1925, 凌忍揚) was the chief editor, Philip Chan (陳康) the associate chief editor, and Samuel Y. C. Tang (b. 1925, 唐佑之), the theology and doctrine reviewer. Several hymnologists, pastors, and church musicians were involved as hymnal consultants, including Baptists from America such as Donald Hustad and Terry W. York.

Aspiring to cover a wide range of musical styles and textual forms, the hymnal is a comprehensive and up-to-date collection of hymns and Christian songs. It totals five hundred and seventy-three items, including Western and Chinese hymns, gospel songs, contemporary hymns, and contemporary praise and worship songs.

#### **Hymns by Baptists**

The 1975 and 1991 Baptist hymnals served, more or less, as models for the new Chinese Baptist hymnal. Several hymns in both hymnals were translated and included in *Century Praise*.

#### **Hymns for Baptism**

In line with its denominational identity, the hymnal included ten items under the category Baptism and Witness (nos. 510-19). In those hymns, the words “baptismal,”

“baptized,” and “baptism” were translated as “jinn” (浸), which literally means “baptized by immersion,” in contrast to other Chinese words used in other hymnals.

### **Chinese hymns and tunes**

Included in the hymn book was a tune called WEN-TI (聞笛, Example 4). It was not based on a traditional Chinese melody, but a song composed by Li Pao-chen (1907-1979, 李抱枕), a Chinese composer and conductor who received his music education from Oberlin College and Columbia University. The pentatonic tune was set to a text adapted from Psalm 29:11 called “May the Lord, Mighty God” (no. 566). The hymn was also selected in several English hymn books, including *The Worshiping Church*.

The hymnal also included a few new hymns and tunes written by contemporary Chinese Christians. Contemporary Chinese hymn writers often faced the challenge of writing new Chinese hymn tunes which were not based on pentatonic scales or Chinese folk melodies and yet remained true to the national identity. Some Chinese church musicians made an effort to write hymns that sounded both fresh and familiar to Chinese Christians.

Cainan K. M. Mui (梅廣文), the Dean of the School of Music at Singapore Bible College, had four hymns in the hymnal, including a tune named CALVARDEN set to a text by a Chinese theologian in Hong Kong Stephen Chan (陳賢一) titled “Children of God, How Blessed You Are,” which has a version for mixed chorus and is often sung by Chinese choirs. The tune with triplets and rhythmic alternations between triple and duple meters beautifully reflects the natural accents of the text, which is based on Romans 8:16-17.

### **Conclusion**

A Chinese hymnal, just as a Western one, “reflects to one degree or another where the church is and where it is moving.”<sup>4</sup> Chinese hymnody began with twenty-seven leaves of hymns translated from Western sources by Robert Morrison in 1818 and

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<sup>4</sup> Beth Bergeron Folkemer, “Reflections on the Hymnody in *ELW*,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 47 (Summer 2008): 178.

developed into the three major hymnals published in the first decade of the twenty-first century, each compiled and edited by Chinese Christians.

### **Hymn Tunes**

Early Chinese hymn tunes were mostly taken from Chinese traditional and folk melodies and arranged in a four-part harmonic style resembling that of Western hymns. In the later part of the twentieth century, however, hymn arrangers began to set hymns in distinctive Chinese styles, some with tunes in unison and accompanied by sparse chords.

### **Hymn Texts**

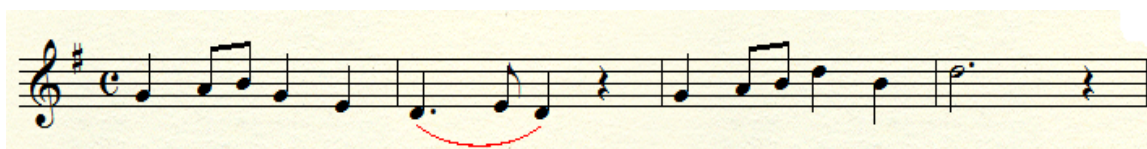
In regard to hymn text translation, hymnal compilers during the missionary era translated hymn texts in the particular dialect their congregations understood. In the 1930s, a few Chinese Christians fluent in both Chinese and English began to translate hymn texts. Usually they carefully followed the Chinese classical poetic style in wording and rhyme scheme.

Since the mid-twentieth century, hymnal compilers have paid great attention to the Chinese translations of hymn texts. They have often altered or re-translated archaic texts to reflect sound doctrine as well as the elegant Chinese literary style.

Western hymns are still well represented in Chinese hymnals because the core repertoire of hymnody is comprised of Western hymns. In addition, a majority of Chinese Christians seem to prefer Western over Chinese hymns. They consider Western hymns to be part of the Chinese church's heritage, since Chinese churches have sung the translated Western hymns for almost two centuries. While a number of Chinese pastors and Christians have written Chinese hymns, their major contributions to Chinese hymnody have been in translating hymn texts.

### **Music Examples**

#### 1. LÊ P'ING (樂平調), incipit

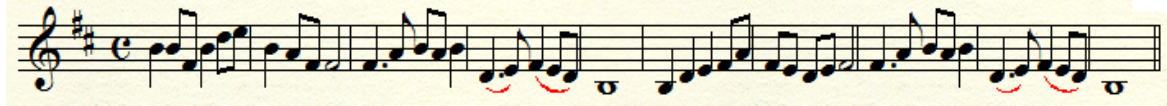




2. MO-LI-HUA (JASMINE; 茉莉花), incipit



3. TOA-SIA (大社)



4. WEN-TI (閩笛)

崇拜特用 / 祝福  
Service Music/Benediction

566 但願上主全能神  
May the Lord, Mighty God



副歌 但願上主全能神 時常保守 賜厚恩，  
(Refrain) May the Lord, might-y God, bless and keep you for-ev - er;



給你完全真平安，努力作工盡本份。  
grant you peace, per-fect peace, cour-age in ev-'ry en-deav - or.



抬頭仰望主慈容，蒙主恩寵常親近，  
Lift up your eyes and see His face and His grace for - ev - er.



抬頭仰望慈容，蒙恩寵常親近，  
Lift up and see His face, His grace for - ev - er.



但願上主全能神 保守賜恩到永恆。  
May the Lord, might-y God, bless and keep you for-ev - er.



但願主全能神 保守賜恩到永恆。  
May the Lord, might-y God, bless and keep you for-ev - er.

WORDS : Anonymous; adapt. Psalm 29:11; 區美賢譯, 2000  
MUSIC : Traditional Chinese Melody  
詩 29:11; Ps. 29:11

WEN-TI  
Irregular

*Century Praise*, "May the Lord, Mighty God" (no. 566).  
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